AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Replace the Paragraph beginning at Page 8, line 18, with the following replacement paragraph:

A mapping function 20d also may be utilized, where the affected point code (APC) is mapped to the SLS value using a prescribed function f, where SLS=f(APC). Although the mapping function 20d may require additional processing resources relative to the configuration options 20a, 20b, and 20c, any or all of the bits in the APC may be used to dynamically generate the SLS; as an example, the function may calculate an 8-bit SLS by starting with the least significant 8-bits, and adding the next significant 8-bits, and then adding the most significant bits; if a 4-bit SLS is used, a similar operation may be performed using [[for]] four bits at a time.

Replace the Paragraph beginning at Page 10, line 3, with the following replacement paragraph:

The management message generator 46 inserts in step 72 the selected SLS value into the SLS field of the MTP3 route management message, and outputs the message to the routing resource 34. The routing resource 34 identifies the outbound linkset 42 based on the destination point code, and selects in step 74 an outbound link 40 based on accessing the corresponding SLS - outbound link table 38 for the identified linkset 42, and determining the active link assigned to the selected SLS value. The SSN SS7 interface 30 outputs the MTP3 route management message in step 76 on the selected outbound link 40.

Replace the Paragraph beginning at Page 10, line 10, with the following replacement paragraph:

According to the disclosed embodiment, load sharing of SSN an SS7 MTP3 route management messages can be implemented while maintaining sequential order of route management messages that are related to an affected signaling node. Hence, unnecessary network management procedures are minimized, since management messages are maintained in the proper sequence.